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Avanca's dual-tubed syringe seeks a distributor

Premium content from New Mexico Business Weekly - by Dennis Domrzalski , NMBW Staff

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A new clinical study has shown that an Albuquerque firm's double-barreled, one-handed medical syringe improves patient outcomes when used with ultrasound to guide injections for some arthritis patients.

The study could help Avanca Medical Devices Inc. land distributors for its line of syringes.

Called the reciprocating procedure device, the dual-tubed syringe allows doctors and nurses to use one hand to extract fluids from a joint. While the needle is still in place, another tube can be attached to it to inject medicine at the same site.

The two-year study of 500 patients was conducted in New Mexico and Montana.

It found that using the one-handed syringe, along with ultrasound to guide the needles to a precise point in a joint, produced 50 percent less pain, improved the effectiveness of the medicine and lowered costs, said the device's inventor, Dr. **Wilmer Sibbitt Jr.**

The study was recently featured on the American College of Rheumatology's website. Sibbitt presented the findings at one of the college's conferences earlier this month.

"We have the only syringe injection device that has been shown to improve the outcomes in patients, and saves money as well," Sibbitt said. "It reduces patient care cost. It takes a long time to get data like this, and the results are just beginning to be published in peer-review journals."

The study could help Avanca, because its double-barreled syringes cost \$1.50 to \$2 compared to conventional, single syringes, which cost 30 cents, Sibbitt said.

The study showed that the beneficial effects of the medicine lasted longer when injected with the device. That means patients don't have to see a physician or get injections as often, Sibbitt added.

"Say I do a knee procedure and the cost of the procedure is \$70 and the cost of the drug is \$14. If you can make that injected medication last a month longer, you can wind up saving \$40 a year," Sibbitt said. "The medication is more effective and lasts longer because it is more precisely delivered."

"You have to look at how much these treatments cost over a year, and if it saves money. If you save money over time and get better results, that's good. The amounts of money might seem trivial, but they make a lot of sense for the bean counters. You have to show this type of savings before you can get moving."

Sibbitt said that in the past 12 months, 18 scientific papers have been written about Avanca's syringes. Eight have been published and 10 are under review, he added.

Sibbitt, a professor of rheumatology and neurology at the University of New Mexico, invented the syringe in 2004.

He was frustrated with what he thought were the inefficiencies of regular syringes, especially when it came to extracting fluids from patients. A needle had to be injected with one hand and the plunger mechanism pulled up with the other. That made it difficult to steady the syringe and do the procedure without injuring a patient, Sibbitt said.

Avanca President and CEO **Jay Simon** said the firm is hoping to partner with a medical device distributor or an ultrasound device manufacturer to market and distribute its syringes.

"Avanca is pretty much a research and development company versus a selling organization," Simon explained.

"We don't have a sales force and we don't want one. We are hoping that a distributor or a manufacturer can take our product and incorporate it into their existing product line and sell it.

"They have the infrastructure to do it, and we don't. That will allow us to focus on developing new products."

Avanca is hoping to patent a new device that can be used for root canals. It was developed by an Albuquerque dentist, Simon noted.

"We just got the prototype in, and we are looking at producing other products," he added.